

CHAPTER -7

SUMMARY AND FINDINGS

The Catholic missionaries were led by Jesus' gospel of love rather than British imperialism. The missionaries of the colonial era were independent of the British regime in the spheres of religion and humanitarian works. They appealed to the British Government on behalf of the locals for reforms, which were beneficial to the locals. The expansion of the missionary activities in the fields of education, economic development and community development/social services witnessed rapid and steady progress since the arrival of Catholic missionaries in Darjeeling and Sikkim. The Catholic missionaries through their educational system, health care programmers and socio-economic developmental programmes, tried to liberate the people from all that hinder the full development of people.

7.1 Summary

There is no denying of the fact that the British Government as well as the local inhabitants who were associated with the enterprises of Catholic missionaries facilitated them in procuring ground for their missionary work by providing the land and property for their Missions in various parts of Darjeeling and Sikkim. The Catholic missionaries, in addition to their ecclesiastical work, took keen interest in establishing educational institutions in the remote villages where there were no schools. They made use of the British authorities for their Mission work in areas that were not very easily accessible. At the time of their advent in the Eastern Himalayas in the middle of nineteenth century, life in the remote hills was almost primitive. Although the local tribal inhabitants had their own traditional knowledge system, that was not enough to improve their lot. The new settlers who migrated from one distressed part to the other for

the sake of survival were in dire need of livelihood, health and education. Even if they eked out some sort of living by selling their labour, they had no access to formal education, health care, communication etc. Livelihood options too were extremely limited. The missionaries, realizing the need of the hour, plunged into humanitarian work like medical care, establishment of orphanages, starting of schools, social services and self employment programmes for the local inhabitants. Shaking initial inhibitions and reluctance, the local inhabitants of the area gradually accepted the Catholic missionaries as their benefactors. However, as can be expected, intensity of acceptance varied from community to community and from place to place.

The impact of the Catholic missionaries varies from very strong in some places and on some communities to almost nil in others. In order to assess the impact of Catholic missionaries on the local people, particularly in the areas of education, economic development and community development/social service, apart from consulting a plethora of documents collected from sources far and wide (both from inside and outside the country), an empirical survey method was adopted. For this purpose, a sample survey was conducted in Darjeeling, Kalimpong and Namchi, three towns with varying characters in terms of history, polity, society and demography. While Darjeeling developed as a pre-eminently British hill station, Kalimpong inherited traits from the Bhutanese rulers and Tibetan tradesmen who frequented the place. On the other hand, Namchi remained a stronghold of the Bhutia rulers of Sikkim till very recently. According to historicity, the intensity of the influence of Catholic missionaries varies from high to moderate to low. In the beginning of this dissertation, four major research questions were proposed to justify the relevance of this research. In this conclusive chapter, the summary of the response to the four research questions has been presented. The questions were:

1. What are the motivating factors that prompted Catholic missionaries to choose Darjeeling and Sikkim as their mission field?
2. How did the Catholic missionaries interact with Himalayan inhabitants?
3. How did the locals respond to the services of Catholic missionaries?
4. What is the overall assessment of the Catholic missionaries by the inhabitants of Darjeeling and Sikkim?

7.1.1 A Summary of the Response to the First Research Question

Archbishop Dr. Carew wished to educate the girls of the British in an excellent ambience. Therefore, when he heard about the cool climate, though the population was scarce, he sent Loreto Nuns to Darjeeling. The Nuns found the place and climate more or less similar to their home country in Ireland. Therefore, acclimatization was not a problem for the pioneer Nuns. Hence, the primary motivation for Loreto Nuns to enter Darjeeling hills was to address the need of education. The second reason for Dr. Carew to establish a Mission Campus was to create a sanatorium for the ailing priests of his archdiocese. Many of the members of his diocese in the plains lost life due to several tropical diseases. The Belgian priests got enervated in the heat of Calcutta and needed healthy air of the Eastern Himalayas. The third motivation factor for Dr. Carew was to address the need of spiritual care of the Catholics. The presence of a Catholic priest is vital in the life of Catholics. As the Catholic population grew in Darjeeling, the presence of the Catholic priest was required to meet their spiritual requirements.

The training of the candidates to priesthood, brotherhood and nunhood is very important for the authorities of the Catholic Mission. Therefore, another motivating factor for the missionaries to enter Eastern Himalayan

region was to establish houses of formation in a congenial climate. The Italian Capuchin priests who arrived in Darjeeling in 1848 established St. Gregory's Seminary. The purpose of the Seminary was to train the young boys to become a missionary. The Jesuits had been searching for an ideal location for a formation house in the province of Bengal. Calcutta, Hazaribag and Asansol were proved fatal due to high temperature and tropical diseases for the European young boys. Therefore, they were badly in need of a climatically good place where the youngsters could get trained. So in 1881, the Propaganda Fide offered Kurseong region to Jesuits to establish a theological college. Thus, St. Mary's theological college came into existence in 1889. The second reason for the Jesuits to reach Darjeeling was to establish a school. The Catholic parents both from Darjeeling and Calcutta made incessant appeal to Rome for a Jesuit school in Darjeeling. In 1887, during the re-structuring of the hierarchy in India, Darjeeling was placed under the Jurisdiction of Calcutta and the whole Darjeeling was given to the Jesuits. Therefore, the Jesuits established St. Joseph's college at Darjeeling in 1888.

The fathers of Foreign Missions of Paris entered Kalimpong sub-division in 1882 in order to reach Lhasa. They camped at Pedong watching the caravan moving from Kalimpong to Lhasa, waiting for their turn. But they were denied entry. Therefore, the missionaries took to humanitarian work in Kalimpong sub-division. In this way the work of Catholic missionaries in Kalimpong welled up from the frustrations of being deprived of an entry into Tibet. The real motivation for the fathers of the Foreign Missions of Paris was to pass over Kalimpong to Tibet. But the circumstances forced the priests to stay at Pedong and work there. The Sisters of St. Joseph's of Cluny established a holiday home in Kalimpong in view of starting a school. Therefore, the motivation was a mixed one. The Salesians of Don Bosco, who arrived at Sonada in 1936, had the

motivation of establishing a formation house. The students of novitiate, philosophy and theology could pursue their studies at Sonada.

The Christian brothers entered Kurseong to impart quality education to the boys. The intention was purely academic. The sisters of the Daughters of the Cross reached Kurseong in 1890 to start a school. Their intention was to establish a holiday home, school and a formation house. The sisters of the Holy Cross reached Kurseong to maintain Romilla Villa as holiday home and at the same time, introduce vocational courses for the well being of women.

From the above facts, it is clear that the Catholic missionaries were in need of health resort. At the same time, education was adopted as a means to sustain the missionaries in this resort. Training of young women and men was also taken up as priority for the continuation of the mission in the Himalayas.

7.1.2 A Summary of the Response to the Second Research Question

With the developmental works of the British, especially construction of roads, city planning and introduction of tea plantation, a large number of people migrated to this area from Nepal. As the population grew in Darjeeling, Kalimpong and Kurseong the pioneer Catholic missionaries observed the need of educating the population. Therefore, the Catholic missionaries established primary schools in the villages. In course of time these primary school were upgraded into secondary and higher secondary schools. The medium of instruction was both Nepali and English. The curriculum was framed to suit the needs of the hill students. The priests and brothers looked after the boys; meanwhile, the nuns cared for the girls. In Darjeeling, education acted as a medium through which the Catholic missionaries interacted with the people.

In Kurseong, the students of St. Mary's college imparted knowledge to the local children during their leisure time. Fr. Wery, after training the orphans in his Guru Training Centre, sent them to villages to establish primary schools for the education of the children of tea garden labourers.

In Kalimpong, the children in the orphanage were given training as catechists and teachers. At the completion of the training, they were requested to start schools in the villages. Whenever a priest started a new mission station, he took his faithful, trained orphans along with him to inaugurate a school. As the years passed by, when more and more Catholic missionaries entered the arena for mission works, the nuns, brothers and priests got involved in the administration of schools.

In Sikkim the early Catholic missionaries brought teachers from Darjeeling district and established schools. They also sent girls and boys for higher studies to colleges at Darjeeling and Calcutta. Nowadays, most of the teachers in the schools are from Sikkim.

The second interaction was in the field of health care programmes. During the colonial era, there were insufficient health centers in the villages. To make the matter worse, the transport facilities were almost non-existent. In this background, the Catholic missionaries in Darjeeling district and Sikkim focused their attention on rural health care programmes. The missionaries both male and female had basic knowledge in medicine. The priests could administer medicines as first aid. The trained nurse nuns could assist in the complicated delivery cases in the villages. Therefore, the priests and nuns acted as doctors where there were no doctors. Now, the Catholic dispensaries and government health care centers cater to the medical needs of the people, especially in the villages.

The third interaction was in the field of socio-economic development of the people. The Catholic missionaries liberated a large number of people from the clutches of moneylenders by introducing co-operative societies. The membership was open to all irrespective of caste, creed and religion. In the agricultural field, the Catholic missionaries introduced quality seeds and improved farming techniques. In the field of animal husbandry, better breed cattle and rearing of pigs were introduced in the villages. Large-scale fodder plantation was introduced in each mission station. The beneficiaries were people from all castes and creed. Many village roads were constructed at the initiative of Catholic missionaries. The villagers rendered their labour, the Missionaries catered food and the road became a reality in different villages in Darjeeling and Sikkim Himalayas.

In the field of evangelization, the priests accepted all those who expressed their desire to follow the religion of the missionaries. As the number grew, the missionaries constructed places of worship. The churches, presbyteries and school buildings exhibit the artistic and architectural skills of the Catholic missionaries both foreign and Indian.

7.1.3 A Summary of the Response to the Third Research Question

The first response of the local inhabitants in favour of Catholic missionaries was in the field of education. A number of local parents sent their children/ward to the Catholic schools to educate them. In return, they took initiative in the upgradation of schools. The local inhabitants responded to the advertisement for the teaching and non-teaching posts in the Catholic institutions. Usually, a child who is admitted in primary section continues his/her studies in the same institution till the final grade.

The second response was in the field of health care programmes. In the initial stage, people were apprehensive of the use of allopathic medicine

administered by the Mission. There was a superstitious belief among some of the local tribals that the use of medicines displeases the spirits. However after witnessing the recovery, they rushed to the priests and nuns for medicine. The people had full trust and confidence in the priest or nun. Therefore, the patients preferred Catholic missionaries to a general compounder. Surprisingly, many were cured and were witness to the medical service of the missionaries. Therefore, wherever there is a Catholic mission, there is also a dispensary with a trained nun as nurse.

The third response was in utilizing the socio-economic developmental activities of the Catholic missionaries. For instance, the Hayden Hall in Darjeeling is a centre where women weave carpets, shoulder bags and handbags in order to earn a living. The co-operative bank, tailoring centre and X-ray centre cater to the people who are below poverty line. The poor inhabitants avail themselves of the housing projects of the missionaries. At Woodcot, Kurseong, the local inhabitants receive training of dairy farming, piggery and mushroom cultivation. In Kalimpong, the labourers who once worked in Swiss Welfare Dairy have opened cheese-making centers in their houses. They still practice the techniques of cottage cheese making that they have learnt from Fr. Butty.

The fourth response was in the field of evangelization. A small section of the three major ethnic groups living in the region have embraced Catholic faith. In Kalimpong sub-division, majority of the Catholics come from Lepcha tribe. Whereas in Darjeeling and Kurseong, various Nepalese castes and tribes have accepted Catholic faith. In Sikkim, majority of the Catholics come from the Rai community of Nepalese.

7.1.4 A Summary of the Response to the Fourth Research Question

The fourth research question sought a response from the people of three geographical units of the universe of the study. The analysis is based on

the quantitative data. The inferences indicate that the catholic missionaries have influenced the local people in a significant way in the areas of educational, economic and community development

7.2 Findings

The analysis of the data reveals perceivable impact of the Catholic missionaries on the hill communities in Darjeeling and Sikkim Himalayas. The major impact areas as outlined below were identified from the analysis of both qualitative and quantitative data.

7.2.1 Education

The Catholic missionaries offer quality education through 68 educational institutions, which are spread out in the hills of Darjeeling and Sikkim. The institutions include pre-primary, primary, junior high school, secondary school, higher secondary school and degree colleges. There are about 51,000 (fifty one thousand) students (as of 2006) receiving education in the Catholic institutions in Darjeeling and Sikkim. The sample survey reveals that 45.71% of the respondents rate the education imparted by Catholic institutions as excellent. At the same time 45.70% of the respondents rate the Catholic school education as good. Thus, a total of 91.41% of the respondents indirectly reveal that there is significant impact of Catholic missionaries on the inhabitants of Darjeeling and Sikkim in the field of education.

7.2.2 Economic Development

The Catholic missionaries have initiated co-operative banks and co-operative societies in the rural areas in order to enhance the economic development of the locals. The co-operative society at Gaucharan, Sikkim and co-operative bank at Pedong, instituted by early Catholic missionaries are still functioning. The Indian Catholic missionaries do not exhibit sufficient interest in the co-operative banks and societies. However the

existing missions provide a variety of employments to the local youth. The locals are employed in the Catholic institutions as teachers and non-teaching staff. Many find job in new and upcoming mission establishments for sundry work and the uneducated youths find plenty of work in the construction, repair and maintenance of Catholic mission buildings/campus. The analysis of the quantitative study reveals that the local inhabitants who are involved in transport industry, hotel industry and tourism industry economically benefit as a result of the presence of Catholic educational institutions in the vicinity. The survey indicates that 20.68% of the respondents consider the contribution of Catholic missionaries as excellent. At the same time, 66.89% of the respondents consider the contribution of the Catholic missionaries as good. Thus a total of 87.57% of the total respondents indicate that there is significant impact of Catholic missionaries on the inhabitants of Darjeeling and Sikkim.

7.2.3 Community Development

The Catholic missionaries have established 11 community development centres in Darjeeling and Sikkim. Hayden hall, Kripa Centre, Vikas Kendra, Shisubhavan, AC mother Veronica, St. Alphonsus Social and Agricultural centre, St. Margaret's Home, Shanta Bhavan, Nazareth Lee Centre, Arogyalaya and Pragati are the community development centres instituted by Catholic missionaries in Darjeeling and Sikkim. Besides these formal centres, the priests, brothers and nuns of each and every Catholic mission undertake community developmental programmes. The survey reveals that 49.68% of the respondents rate the involvement of Catholic missionaries in the field of community development as excellent. At the same time, 42.78% are of the opinion that the community developmental programmes of Catholic missionaries are good. Thus a total of 92.46% of the total respondents admit that there is significant

impact of Catholic missionaries on the inhabitants of Darjeeling and Sikkim in the field of Community development.

7.2.4 Health Care Programmes

The Catholic missionaries have established 25 health centres across Darjeeling and Sikkim. The trained nuns administer first aids before patients are sent to hospitals. The well-maintained dispensary records reveal that the first public Catholic dispensary was established in 1946 at Git-Dabling in Kalimpong sub-division. Prior to this, private dispensaries of Catholic educational institutions extended medical services to the locals. In addition, the Catholic missionaries dispensed some medicines from their personal first aid kit. In 1950's there was only one Catholic dispensary in Kalimpong sub-division. In the 1960's one more was added. During 1970's five new dispensaries were established. In 1980's eight dispensaries were added. In 1990's six dispensaries were opened in remote areas of Kalimpong. In the beginning of 21st century four dispensaries were opened, bringing the total to 25.

7.2.5 Evangelization

The Catholic missionaries have established 43 architectural edifices for worship. They have not adhered to the conventional architectural style of the Roman Catholic Churches. As part of inculturation, the buildings are designed in the style of Buddhist monastery or a Hindu temple. Mary Mother of God Church, Kalimpong, St. Teresa's Church, Kalimpong, St. Joseph's Church, Kalimpong, St. Maurice' Church, Suruk are perfect examples of Buddhist monastery style Catholic churches. St. Patrick's Church at Kankebong is built in Hindu style. The churches in Sikkim are fashioned after Buddhist art and architecture. Whereas the churches in Darjeeling and Kalimpong sub divisions are in Gothic style. There are 31,943 (Thirty one thousand ,nine hundred and forty three) Catholics,

spread out in the Catholic mission areas of Darjeeling and Sikkim (as of 2006).

7.2.6 Literary Activity

In order to instruct the locals on the Catholic faith, the missionaries brought out books in Tibetan, Lepcha and Nepali languages. In 1882 Fr. Desgodins bought a small hand press to print his Tibetan manuscripts of the Bible. He published his Tibetan-Latin-French dictionary in 1899. In the same year, he published Tibetan grammar.

In 1921 Fr. Pittet translated Missal and ritual from Latin to Nepali. He also composed Nepali prayer books. Fr. Michael Wery printed Nepali prayers and hymns in his press at St. Alphonsus's school. Fr. Frank Farrel had initiated the translation of Bible from Latin/English to Nepali. Since he died before the completion of the work, Fr. William Bourke completed the entire translation of the Bible. Thus the literary works of the Catholic missionaries have enriched Nepali, Lepcha and Bhutia languages.

7.2.7 Poverty Alleviation Programmes

The Catholic missionaries, as part of their poverty alleviation programmes, encourage the inhabitants in and around the mission campus to cultivate various crops. They take initiative to provide hybrid seeds to people. Rearing of cows, pigs, chickens, rabbits, goats yield profit in the hills because of abundance of fodder.

7.2.8 Religious Harmony

It is evident from the personal interviews and observations that there is perfect inter-religious harmony in Darjeeling and Sikkim Himalayas. The Hindus, Buddhists and Protestants and Catholics live and work together in their societies. Till date, no one has heard of any religious clash in this

region, since neither the local people are hostile to missionaries, nor the missionaries were over-powering.

7.2.9 Catholicism in the Eastern Himalayas

The Catholic missionaries have succeeded in establishing Catholic religion and its practices in Eastern Himalayas due to the harmonious nature of the inhabitants. Catholicism spread fast among the Lepchas since they were very receptive from the very beginning. In many areas, they initiated the move to become Catholics and approached the missionaries en masse to embrace Catholic faith. The next ethnic group that accepted Catholicism in large number is the Rai community.

7.2.10 Indigenous Catholic Missionaries

The foreign Catholic missionaries both men and women encourage local boys and girls to become priests, brothers and nuns. After identifying bright boys and girls the missionaries place the younger ones in boarding schools for education. A vigorous drilling in the Catholic doctrines transforms these boys and girls into excellent Catholic missionaries. The present Bishop of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Darjeeling is Stephen Lepcha, a local tribal priest from Kalimpong sub-division.

7.3 Concluding Remarks

The Catholic Missionaries have touched the lives of Eastern Himalayan inhabitants in very many ways. They were pragmatists. Since there was a need for educational institutions, they got involved in education. In the field of education, it was the Catholic missionaries who established elementary schools in the tea gardens of Darjeeling-Kurseong subdivisions and villages of Kalimpong sub-division. Many local students who received education in Catholic missionary institutions got attracted to the idealistic lives of the missionaries and embraced Catholic faith.

Since medical services were poor, the Catholic missionaries often acted as medicine men and women. Since the missionaries believed in both spiritual and physical well being, they insisted on prayers along with medicine, the combined effect of which helped the weak and sick to recover faster. As a result of miraculous healings, quite a few locals accepted the religion of the missionaries.

The social service centres established by the Catholic missionaries cater to the needs of every one irrespective of caste, creed and religion. The social service programmes of the Catholic missionaries do not make the people dependent on the missionaries; instead the individuals are guided to begin self-employment programmes. The Catholic missionaries from abroad came to the Eastern Himalayas to live, work and die among the people whom they loved. When India attained independence in 1947, the Catholic missionaries did not leave Darjeeling and Sikkim, instead applied for Indian citizenship to the new government. The tombs of Catholic missionaries in the Catholic cemeteries speak of the dedication and selfless service of the missionaries to the local people. The Indian priests, nuns and brothers follow the footsteps of foreign Catholic missionaries in the dedicated services for the well being of the inhabitants of Darjeeling and Sikkim.

The local people do appreciate the services of Catholic missionaries, particularly in the fields of education and health care. There is a popular demand for more educational institutions, to be opened by the Catholic missionaries in Darjeeling and Sikkim. The people do avail the facilities of the dispensaries for getting first aids before the patients are sent to hospitals. They also make use of the ambulance of the Catholic Mission to transport the patients to hospital. Reciprocally, a considerable number of local inhabitants join the mission. There has been a noticeable rise in the number of boys and girls from Darjeeling and Sikkim Himalayas who join

the formation houses to become priests and nuns respectively. Consequently, the recruitment from the rest of India has been reduced.

7.4 Suggested Areas for Further Research

This research may be a pointer to the future researchers. A few topics, which may be dealt in the future, are listed below.

1. Intermingling of Catholic art with Buddhist art by the French and Swiss Missionaries in Kalimpong.
2. Architecture of Church buildings by French and Swiss fathers in Kalimpong.
3. Study of paintings in Catholic Churches, which depict the last journey of Jesus on this earth.
4. A study of the design on the tabernacles.
5. A study of Catholic sculptures.
6. A study of various Catholic portraits.
7. Analytical study of the administration in the Roman Catholic Church.
8. A comparative study on Catholicism and Protestantism.
9. Comparative study between Catholic village and Hindu village/Buddhist village regarding socio-economic development.
10. A comparative study on Eastern Himalayan Religions.

The data gathered through multi-methods clearly indicate the course of development and spread of Catholicism due to the activities of Catholic missionaries in Darjeeling since 1846 and in Sikkim since 1952. The activities have affected all layers of the society in the hills. The improvement in literacy rate, employment, agricultural development, health, improved means of communication, mobility of individual in social hierarchy, improved housing facilities, large playgrounds and

magnificent buildings are indicators of development due to constant interaction between the Catholic missionaries and local inhabitants in concerned areas.

The missionaries who came from abroad to Darjeeling-Sikkim Himalayas did pioneering works in the field of health. Medical facilities were very poor towards the end of nineteenth and in the twentieth centuries due to lack of communication and suitable medicines. The missionaries traversed through impregnable forests and mountain tracks to reach out to the people. The missionaries had brought some medicine for themselves. But, at the time of necessity, some medicines were dispensed of in order to save the lives of people. The people built their confidence in the effectiveness of the medicines given to them by Catholic missionaries. They also witnessed cure of various sickness. As more and more people approached Catholic missionaries for treatment, hospitals and dispensaries were opened across Darjeeling-Sikkim Himalayas.

Education, social services, health care programmes, charity, socio-economic developmental activities are interrelated and interconnected. They are means to community development. Therefore, it may be said that the Catholic missionaries also acted as catalysts in community development in Darjeeling-Sikkim Himalayas.